3: Kabbadias

EH14 Sarakatsani EH14

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[For a theoretical discussion of the inter-relationship of myth and knowledge, see Category 121 (or Category 116, pp. 416-423).]

/382 cont./

182 As for Sarakatsani knowledge, we must recall that it is dominated
●81 by utilitarianism, the advantages that may be derived from it, and not by disinterestedness. A struggler is not a contemplator, and the Sarakatsani are strugglers (isolation, herding). For their society and their kind of life, "scientific" research would be a luxury, aside from the fact that they lack the means to attain the knowledge that they lack. On the other hand, Sarakatsani knowledge is relevant to both /383/ material life (technology, crafts and herding) and the social man; it carries the two-fold concern of ensuring man's subsistence and organizing him more effectively economically as well as socially (kinship,
182 cooperation, etc.). Moreover, the Sarakatsani have need of a certain
812 ideology capable of justifying their condition and of leading to a mythologizing of certain aspects of their existence which is all the more necessary since their life is beset with difficulties. Their constant struggle, their sacrifice and solidarity, their austere regime, etc., can be maintained only if these things are idealized and surrounded with myth. When you ask a Sarakatsani to look down on his life and express judgments about it, you are astonished to hear him idealize his condition even in its least attractive aspects.

182 The limitations of knowledge, as we have noted, encourage the appeal
789 to cosmological and anthropological myth, which is expressed, as we have
755 also said, in curative magic and a partial syncretism with Christianity.
(789) The subjects that dominate these two spheres of ideas and the practices derived from them are fecundity, fertility, abundance, prosperity, health, protection against evil influences, finally foretelling the future, and these with respect to men as well as animals. The practices in question therefore protect the family and the kingroup, economic life and resources, in fact the entire community. This point opens the way